1. CAUSES AND OUTCOMES OF THE 1905 REVOLUTION UP TO 1914

Nature of the Tsarist regime, pressure for change (social, economic and political) and the reaction of Nicholas II to them

- Tsar Nicholas II believed firmly in a system of autocracy - ruled by one person, himself. He exercised his power through a bureaucracy, the army, the secret police, and the Russian Orthodox Church. By the early 20th century this system had been shown to possess several problems.
- The aristocracy, who owned the vast majority of land in Russia, was very conservative and against any changes which might pose a threat to their privileged position. The bureaucracy (government administrators) was inflexible and often obstructed reform and the army and secret police often caused resentment by their harsh methods. The Church seemed more interested in preserving its own position as a large landowner than looking after the spiritual needs of the people.
- However, the main weakness of autocracy was that this system very much depended on the calibre of the individual Tsar and Nicholas was not the best person for this job.
- There was little appetite for change at the centre of the regime. The Tsar and his family had little comprehension of the world outside their palaces or of the needs of the ordinary Russians, and there was little understanding as to what was needed to be effective. He had a narrow focus on events, especially shown by his insensitivity and detachment seen during the Russo-Japanese war of 1905.
- By the end of 1905, the government was in deep financial trouble. The cost of the war and falling tax revenues were driving the government to the brink of financial collapse. However, Witte secured a huge loan, largely from French bankers, in April 1906. This loan stabilised the economy and gave the government money to pay for its functions for a year. It paid for the troops who were needed to put down uprisings and restore order.
- The crucial factor was that the army remained loyal, despite a rash of mutinies. Once it had received pay and changes to conditions of service, it supported the Tsar and could be employed in putting down the revolution in the cities and later revolts in the countryside.

Key events of the Revolution, e.g. 'Bloody Sunday', wider risings and the October Manifesto

- 'Bloody Sunday' is an event where Father Gapon (an Orthodox priest) led a march of workers to the Tsar's Winter Palace to give the Tsar a petition to demand for higher wages, shorter working hours and free elections.

- When the marchers arrived at the gates of the palace, the troops opened fire, killing over a hundred demonstrators. This event had two immediate effects:
    - The first was that the Tsar was responsible for giving the orders to shoot; this was untrue but the event destroyed the idea of the Tsar as the 'little father' of the people.
    - The second effect was to produce a wave of sympathy strikes and unrest grew.

- The October Manifesto split the liberals and socialists. The liberals wanted political reform and movement towards a constitutional democracy; the socialists wanted a social revolution. Many liberals felt they had got what they wanted out of the Manifesto and urged that the Tsar be supported.
- The middle classes feared the continuation of violence and disorder. They wanted the revolution to stop and a return to authority and control.
- The government used brutal, repressive measures, especially punitive expeditions, to bring the populace into line and beat them into submission. These methods were effective in re-establishing government control across the Empire.

The reassertion of Tsarist authority: the Dumas and Stolypin's reforms

- Peter Stolypin attempted to preserve the autocracy by bringing in reforms but he was attacked by left- and right wing politicians, indicating the difficulty of modernising Russia within the framework of an autocracy.

- Stolypin's reforms in agriculture attempted to create more productive independent peasants who would support the regime but the reforms had only limited success. Agricultural production grew, but despite some innovation, farming methods were still largely antiquated, using the strip system, and organised by rural communes. Some peasants prospered while others remained impoverished. A rootless and discontented class of landless peasants was growing, with many moving to the towns and cities.

- Industrial production grew steadily over the period but Russian industry was uneven and unbalanced.

- The working classes were becoming more radical after the Lena Goldfields Massacre in 1912. Militancy and strikes increased in 1912–14.

The extent of opposition to the Tsarist rule

- The revolutionary parties were not in a strong position in 1914 although support for the Bolsheviks had revived after 1912.

2. CAUSES AND IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES OF THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION IN 1917

Political, social and economic effects of the First World War, impact of military defeats

- The First World War had a devastating impact on Russia with millions killed and wounded. Incompetent administration and the collapse of the distribution system resulted in a lack of supplies, weapons and medical services at the Front and shortages of food and fuel in major cities, especially Petrograd. Confidence in the government plummeted.
- The professional classes and businessmen set up non-governmental organisations to improve supplies of war materials, which seemed to offer an alternative form of government.

Nicholas II as a war leader: implications of personal leadership in the war effort

- The Tsar made several bad mistakes. He went to the Front, taking personal responsibility for the war. He would not work with the Progressive Bloc in the Duma or co-operate with the non-governmental organisations. He left the Tsarina and Rasputin in charge of the government.
- The Tsarina and Rasputin created instability by changing ministers continually and became a focus for criticism and antagonism towards the regime. The ruling élite lost confidence in the Tsar.

How the Tsar contributed to his own downfall

<u>Personality and leadership</u>

- Personality – weak but obstinate, indecisive, lack of interest in the world around him.
- Did not have the skills (e.g., organisational) or capabilities (e.g., unwilling to address people directly) to do the job of ruling Russia.
- Used repression as the main weapon in dealing with problems, relying on the army, which did not like to be used as a police force.

<u>Reform</u>

- Never willingly supported Witte's or Stolypin's reforms: did not want the changes in society these would entail.

- Wanted to protect court power and power of landowning classes. Sided where he could with right-wing groups who resisted reform.
- Half-heartedly supported Stolypin's land reforms. Resisted extension of zemstva to western provinces.
- No real concessions to workers on limiting working days or improving working conditions. Rejected trade unions or bodies representing workers.

Attitude to political change

- Resisted all forms of change pre-1905 – confirmed believer in autocracy. Not keen on zemstva or allowing local self-government.
- October Manifesto wrenched out of him – never committed to it and subsequently reneged on promises. Missed opportunity to bring liberal intelligentsia onto his side.
- Did not really want the Duma or representative body in first place and in Fundamental Laws showed his unwillingness to share power.
- Would not cooperate with the dumas during 1906–14 or with Progressive Bloc during war.

Misjudgements and mistakes

- Nicholas failed to realise the seriousness of the situation building in 1904 and the need to respond to the demands of liberals and workers. Bloody Sunday 1905 resulted in massive loss of respect for the Tsar.
- Appointment of nonentities and incompetents to run government after Stolypin's death.
- His and Tsarina's support for Rasputin damaged the reputation of the royal family.
- Going to the Front in 1915, taking on personal responsibility for war.
- Leaving the government in hands of Tsarina and Rasputin.
- Rejected the proposals of the Progressive Bloc in 1916. February 1917 – still not really aware of the dangers to the regime and took no action until too late.

The Revolution of February and the abdication of Nicholas II

- By the beginning of 1917 there was little support left for the Tsar and his government. A spontaneous eruption of discontent in February 1917 saw him swept from power when the army and its generals deserted him.

The formation and purpose of the Provisional Government

3. HOW AND WHY DID THE BOLSHEVIKS GAIN POWER IN OCTOBER 1917?

Crises of the Provisional Government

- The Provisional Government had no control over events. It was discredited by disobedience from the Soviets and by the Kornilov Affair. The Russian army was suffering huge losses in the ongoing war, and this made the Provisional Government even more unpopular.
- Failure of the Kerensky government to have the constituent assembly convened. Kerensky could not deliver other reforms, such as the redistribution of land or a new constitution.
- The July Days - when sailors at Kronstadt, the naval base close to Petrograd, established their own government in defiance of the Provisional Government, and instigated a poorly planned rising against them - the government was able to crush the uprising with the support of the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks.
- The July Days to show the dissatisfaction of the people, food shortages (same as one of the causes for the February Revolution). It also showed that the Provisional Government – now led by Kerensky as prime minister – still possessed some authority. It branded Lenin as a German agent, closed down the Bolsheviks' newspaper, Pravda, and dispersed the party's members.
- Line was very blurred at this stage; nobody knew who was coming or going
- The Kornilov affair - when the commander-in-chief of the army, who favoured strong action against the Bolsheviks, attempted to march on Petrograd at the head of a troop of soldiers to restore order. It was unclear how far Kerensky approved of the plan, however the scheme failed and Kerensky quickly accused Kornilov of attempting a takeover to establish a military dictatorship, and was arrested and dismissed from his post.
- The Kornilov affair is a catalyst which brings down the Kerensky government, not a cause. The affair demonstrated the weakness of the Provisional Government. Kerensky had lost the favour of the right by turning against Kornilov, but he had also alienated the left, who suspected him of initially being involved in counter-revolutionary plotting. The episode also further undermined military discipline, with soldiers deserting and turning to the soviets.
- This sealed the fate for Kerensky and his government

Lenin's leadership of the Bolsheviks

- Lenin promised to end the war, to give land 'to the people' and ensure adequate food supplies provided the useful rallying cry 'peace, land and bread'. This slogan also

demonstrated the way in which the Bolsheviks were able to combine the demands of industrial workers, soldiers and peasants to maximise their appeal.

- The Bolshevik Party and its programme became the focus for all opposition to the Provisional Government and support for them grew rapidly during the summer.
- The frustration of soldiers and workers exploded in the July Days, partly engineered by middle-ranking Bolsheviks. But the Bolshevik leadership was not ready to take power and the uprising fizzled out.
- The Bolsheviks were not the tightly disciplined, unified body that some have supposed, although its organisation was better than that of other parties.
- Kerensky tried to use Kornilov to gain control of Petrograd but Kornilov had his own agenda.
- The Kornilov affair was disastrous for right-wing forces and the Provisional Government but gave the Bolsheviks a boost. The affair revived Bolshevik fortunes, while at the same time undermining the position of other socialist groups.
- The Bolshevik's stand against Kornilov increased their support and gave them the renewed confidence of the workers. This quickly became evident in the September elections of the Petrograd Soviet, where Trotsky became president and the Bolsheviks gained control of the Soviet. The Kornilov affair had also given the Bolsheviks a much stronger position in the Red Guards, now a force of 10,000.

The role of Trotsky and the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC)

- Trotsky was regarded with suspicion by some Bolsheviks because he had previously been a supporter of the Mensheviks. Nonetheless, his role in the October Revolution was of key importance.
    - Trotsky supported Lenin's idea of seizing power through an armed uprising when other Bolshevik leaders were more cautious
    - He planned the details of the seizure of power in Petrograd. This was aimed at taking over key buildings in the city.
    - He organised the Bolshevik Red Guard, taking responsibility for recruitment and discipline, and coordinated military operations through the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC)
    - He was a great speaker, able to motivate Bolshevik supporters to carry out their actions, and was an inspiration through his unflagging energy.

The key events of the October Revolution

- In Feb 1917, Bolsheviks were not able to seize power due to low membership, by October they managed to seize a coup. Oct Rev. was well organised and they executed the coup in a very skillful manner as they were able to align themselves to the demands of the workers and peasants. In a very short time, the Bolsheviks were able to position themselves in a very advantageous position.
- Lenin urged his party leadership to stage an immediate uprising but, initially, they were reluctant.
- Trotsky persuaded Lenin to put off the uprising until the All-Russian Congress of Soviets so that the Bolsheviks could claim to have taken power in the name of the soviets (a revolution of the people; popular action).
- Kerensky's inept attempts to ward off the Bolshevik coup played into their hands and there was very little resistance from the Provisional Government.
- During 24–26 October, the Bolshevik take-over was carried out successfully.
- Large numbers of ordinary people supported the idea of the soviets taking power, but not the idea of the Bolsheviks taking power in a one-party state
- To summarise, the Bolsheviks had moved into a vacuum created by the weakness of the Provisional Government.

4. HOW WERE THE BOLSHEVIKS ABLE TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POWER UP TO 1921?

Bolshevik reforms and the establishment of a dictatorship

The impact of Brest-Litovsk

- The treaty of Brest-Litovsk was harsh, as Russia would lose the following areas:
    - Ukraine
    - Finland
    - Baltic provinces
    - parts of Poland
    - Georgia

      and that Russia would have to pay Germany 3,000 million roubles in reparations to cover war damages.

- The treaty was extremely unpopular within the Russian leadership. Trotsky refused to sign in person and sent a subordinate to take his place at the ceremony. The Left SRs, who envisaged a popular guerrilla war against the invaders, were particularly hostile to it. Lenin's opponents gave way in face of his repeated insistence on party loyalty and his threats to resign if they did not accept his strategy.

Reasons for the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War including War Communism

- The Civil War was very complex with many forces operating over a large territory. It was a very confusing period during which the sides were not clearly defined.
- White forces made substantial gains in late 1918 and up to the autumn of 1919, putting the Bolsheviks in a crisis situation. By October 1919 the Bolsheviks had turned the tide, picking off White armies one by one, and thereafter pushed the Whites back until their final defeat at the end of 1920.
- The Reds were in a better position geographically, and had better organisation, better communications and a clear line of command. However, the Red Army had problems, particularly the high desertion rate.
- Trotsky made a significant individual contribution to winning the war by his organisational abilities (transforming the Red Army), his energy and his personal bravery.
- The Whites lacked good leadership, unity, and co-ordination between armies during campaigns. They were riven by internal divisions and squabbles.
- The Whites lacked support from the peasants and national minorities because of their reactionary policies.
- Lenin adopted War Communism to meet the needs of the army and to conduct a civil war on the 'internal front'.
- Terror was an essential component of this internal civil war to defeat counter-revolution.
- Communists saw War Communism as the route to socialism.
- Most people's experience of War Communism was that it was a terrible time of privation and chaos.

The main features of War Communism

<u>Grain requisitioning</u>

- The Bolsheviks had been sending units of Red guards and soldiers out into the countryside to find grain for the hard-pressed cities. In May 1918 a Food-Supplies Dictatorship was set up to establish the forcible requisitioning of grain as the standard policy. Unsurprisingly, the peasants resisted bitterly.

Banning of private trade

- All private trade and manufacture were banned. However, the state trading organisation was extremely chaotic and the industry was simply not producing enough consumer goods. So an enormous black market developed, without which most people could not have survived.

Nationalisation of industry

- All industry was brought under state control and administered by the Supreme Council of National Economy (Vesenkha). Workers' committees were replaced by single managers reporting to central authorities. These were often the old bourgeois managers now called 'specialists'. This was the only way to stop the chaos caused by the factory workers' committees who had voted themselves huge pay rises, intimidated management and stolen materials for illegal goods.

- Not all workers were against nationalisation: many, faced with the closure of their factory, urged that it be nationalised and kept open. They were desperate to keep their jobs.

Labour discipline

- Discipline was brought back to the workplace. There were fines for lateness and absenteeism. Internal passports were introduced to stop people fleeing to the countryside. Piece-work rates were brought back, along with bonuses and a workbook that was needed to get rations.

Rationing

- A class-based system of rationing was introduced. The labour force was given priority along with Red Army soldiers. Smaller rations were given to civil servants and professional people such as doctors. The smallest rations, barely enough to live on, were given to the burzhui or middle classes – or as they were now called, 'the former people'.

The Red Terror

- Another crucial component of War Communism was the systematic use of terror to back up the new measures and deal with opposition. The Bolsheviks faced increased opposition inside the cities from:
    - workers who were angry at their economic plight, low food rations and state violence. There were calls for new Soviet elections, a free press, the restoration of the Constituent Assembly and the overthrow of the Sovnarkom (only six months after the revolution). Signs appeared on city walls saying: 'Down with Lenin and horsemeat! Give us the Tsar and pork!'
    - anarchists who rejected the authoritarian control of the government

    - left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries who were protesting about the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. They turned to terrorism, shooting the German ambassador in July 1918 to try to wreck the Russian relationship with the Germans. They captured Dzerzhinsky, the head of the Cheka, in May and managed to shoot Lenin in August 1918. Two other Bolshevik Party leaders were murdered.

- They put the regime under real pressure. The assassination attempt on Lenin prompted the Cheka to launch the Red Terror in the summer of 1918, but this was simply an intensification of what was already happening. From June onwards, Socialist Revolutionaries had been arrested in large numbers, along with anarchists and members of other extreme left groups. Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were excluded from taking part in soviets. Many Kadets were already in prison, others had fled to the south

Kronstadt and the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP)

Kronstadt uprising (1921)

- In Feb 1921, there was an uprising of sailors at the Kronstadt naval base, and a revolutionary committee was formed to oppose the imposition of orders by the Bolshevik government.
- The uprising was brutally crushed by the Red Army, but the affair was a serious shock to the regime because the sailors had previously been strong supporters of the Bolshevik Revolution. After a siege of two weeks, the base fell and the survivors were treated mercilessly.

<u>Reasons for the NEP (summary)</u>

- To increase food production by giving the peasants an incentive to grow more
- To get the economy going again after the chaos of the Civil War. An element of private ownership would provide an incentive for small businesses and help increase industrial production and trade.
- To reduce opposition to the Bolsheviks and quell unrest, such as the Tambov Rising and Kronstadt uprising.
- To relax economic policies, especially the unpopular measures associated with War Communism.

Key features of the New Economic Policy

- Grain requisitioning abolished
- Small businesses reopened
- Grain requisitioning was replaced by a ‘tax in kind’. Peasants had to give Small-scale businesses under private ownership were allowed to reopen a fixed proportion of their

grain to the state, but the amount that they made a profit. This included businesses like small workshops and had to hand over was much less than the amounts taken by requisitioning. factories that made goods such as shoes, nails and clothes. Lenin realised They could sell any surpluses on the open market. that peasants would not sell their produce unless there were goods that they wanted on sale.

- Ban on private trade removed
- State control of heavy industry
- The removal of the ban on private trade meant that food and goods could
- The state kept control of large-scale heavy industries like coal, steel and oil. flow more easily between the countryside and the towns. Privately owned
- It also retained control of transport and the banking system. Industry shops were reopened. Rationing was abolished and people had to buy food organised into trusts that had to buy materials and pay their workers and goods from their own income. The money economy was back! their own budgets. If they failed to manage their budgets efficiently, they could not expect the state to bail them out.
- The details of the NEP were worked out among members of the Politburo and presented to the party with the full support of the heavy hitters. Zinoviev put the main Politburo line: 'I ask you, comrades, to be clear that the New Economic Policy is only a temporary deviation, a tactical retreat.'
- Bukharin rammed home the point: 'We are making economic concessions to avoid political concessions.' Lenin compared it to Brest-Litovsk, something that had to be done but which would not last forever. This turnaround was hard for Lenin to justify: some party members considered the NEP to be a betrayal of the principles of the October Revolution. At the Tenth Party Congress in 1921, there was fierce debate. What finally persuaded the doubters was the Kronstadt revolt. They realised that splits in the party could result in their losing power altogether. There was a genuine desire for unity and they were prepared to fall in behind Lenin – as long as the NEP was a 'temporary' measure